

Families First in Numbers

Updated with Information from June 2003

The Families First program began in September 1996 under a waiver from the Federal government. Our waiver allowed us to implement provisions which are often different from the reform legislation at the national level. Families First, like "welfare" programs in all the states, provides a cash benefit with supportive services to families with children who are experiencing financial difficulties. Many of the basic eligibility requirements of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program have remained, but the program is distinct in many important ways.

Families First is Tennessee's welfare reform plan which replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. The temporary cash assistance program emphasizes work, training, and personal responsibility. Families are eligible for cash benefits for no more than 18 months (whether sequential or not) before exiting the program for 3 months. The limit for lifetime assistance is 60 months. As part of the Families First program, each participant must agree to follow a Personal Responsibility Plan (PRP).

Unless a participant is exempt from the work requirement, he/she must also agree to develop, follow, and complete a work plan. The work plan is based on the individual's needs and skills.

Current number of Assistance Groups (cases): 71,057

Current number of adults: 54,815

Current number of children: 134,237

Assistance Groups prior to Families First (August, 1996): 91,499

Average monthly wage of employed participants: \$630.37

Average monthly cash benefit for participating families: \$170.81

The number of families served by the program between September 1996 and today now exceeds 200,000.

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